

throughout the hot weather at odd times. Only yesterday I saw a pair in a pond with a male Shoveller, a pair of Spot-bill, and Lesser Whistling Teal and I also shot a male Garganey which had practically changed into winter dress and was flying well. On the sea-shore, I saw Oyster-catchers, Curlews, Red and Greenshanks, and Lesser Flamingoes with young (newly arrived). How strange it was to see all these birds together at this time of the year!

BHAVNAGAR,  
24th June 1947.

K. S. DHARMAKUMARSINHJI

[The S-W Monsoon was exceptionally erratic this year. Kathiawar and Kutch had practically no rain till the middle of August.—  
E.T.S.]

### 19.—ON THE COMMON BLIND SNAKE (*TYPHLOPS BRAMINUS*)

Two years ago when I was stationed with the United States Army near Midnapur, Bengal, I came into the possession of a snake of the genus *Typhlops* and wrote to you concerning its identity.

I have recently had an opportunity to examine this specimen more closely, and it occurred to me that you might possibly be interested in the results of this examination.

The snake is definitely a *T. braminus*; length, 168 mm.; diameter at region of the heart, 3.1 mm. It was captured and killed 14th June, 1945 and is a gravid female.

The eggs, which were seven in number, were rather well formed in the posterior region of the body—though less well so in the more anterior regions. The posterior egg measured 13.5 mm. in length and 3.1 mm. in diameter. It was covered with a well formed, distensible, membrane or shell which, however, lacked the external covering of long fibers characteristic of ophidian eggs. Upon microscopic examination, it appeared to be composed of very short fibers overlying one another in a completely random orientation.

CHICAGO, 111, U.S.A.  
22nd July 1947.

WARREN P. SIGHTS

### 20.—AGGRESSIVE DEMONSTRATION BY RUSSELL'S VIPER (*VIPERA RUSSELLI*)

Yesterday at sunset, Mr. W. Ivanow and myself were walking from Naogaon to Kihim by the main village road. We found a Russell's Viper, about 2½ ft. long, lying by the roadside. As we passed it, it hissed and began to move away slowly. It was so close to an overgrown parapet wall that it could not be killed with a stick. In order to induce it to come out in the open, I stamped my foot on the ground and made some noise. Upon this the viper turned round and deliberately leaped forward menacingly a foot or so in my direction obviously by way of a threat demonstration. I withdrew my foot quickly, whereupon the snake calmly returned to its former position and moved on, seemingly unperturbed, till it found refuge in a pile of stones.

This is the first experience I have had of a snake demonstrating in this manner, and I would be interested to know if this habit has been recorded. It postulates a consciousness of its own potency on the part of the reptile; its unhurried departure after the feint would suggest that it is a normal practice. Perhaps some reader can tell us more about it.

'YALI', KIHIM (KOLABA DIST.),  
15th May 1947.

A. A. A. FYZEE

[Russell's Viper is sluggish in habit and ordinarily displays a reluctance to move even when approached by man. It is this habit to lie up or bask on open paths and roadways and the snake's disinclination to leave the resting place that lead to its being trodden upon and to people being bitten. In this character the Russell's Viper is markedly different from most snakes whose first impulse upon human approach is escape. The viper's 'demonstration' in the instance described above was a natural reaction and protest against disturbance; its unhurried departure, its characteristic mode of progress.

—RDS.]

## 21.—HAMADRYAD AT BHIM TAL, U. P.

Having discredited first hand accounts of the King Cobra being seen and killed at Bhim Tal, 4,500 feet above sea level, I was witness to its confirmation on the 23rd June 1947.

While having tea with Col. Jones he mentioned that a large snake had been reported shot that morning in the process of swallowing another snake of about five feet. We both agreed that if true, this may be a Hamadryad and decided after tea to visit the place but half a mile from his lovely house. The whole party including Miss Kalberer accompanied us to the spot. Miss Kalberer I should mention is the oldest European resident of Bhim Tal with some 50 odd years in the place, during which time she can recollect six other instances of King Cobras being killed in the valley. She identified this as the same species as was killed on previous occasions.

This was a fine specimen, 10½ feet long in perfect condition except for the head which was shot away. The occipital shields with the perietals had been shot away but the skin of the hood with cross chevrons were intact. The colour was chocolate with dirty white or yellow chevrons all the length of the body fading into stars or broken chevrons on the tail. The throat was yellow, and ventral scales entire dividing at the end of the tail.

This is the seventh specimen killed in the last 22 years, and all but one, which was shot swimming the lake below Lake View Hotel, have been accounted for at the top end of the lake or towards Sath Tal. Col. Jones's father shot a pair near his house and in later years Miss Leslie shot another at the same place. Another pair were shot above the upper bazar on the hill to the right.

No case is on record of any one being attacked, or cattle killed, and there is no name for the snake in the local dialect which points to them being stray visitors from the Gola or Naini stream through Sath Tal.